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RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU 0196
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000382

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/01/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CH](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: FRANK HSIEH TO URGE FORMER PRESIDENT CHEN
SHUI-BIAN TO STOP MEDDLING IN DPP POLITICS

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Classified By: AIT Director Stephen M. Young,
Reasons: 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Former Premier and presidential candidate Frank Hsieh told the Director on April 1 that he would use his radio program later in the day to strongly urge former Chen Shui-bian to stop interfering in DPP politics. The party desperately needs to distance itself from the former president, Hsieh explained, but so far no one has dared speak out against Chen, who is under detention and on trial for several corruption charges. Hsieh underscored his support for DPP Chair Tsai Ing-wen, but suggested she was not strong enough to take on Chen Shui-bian alone. Hsieh stressed the importance of Taipei County in the year-end local elections, with former Premier Su Tseng-chang the likely DPP candidate. End Summary.

Chen Shui-bian and DPP Politics

¶2. (C) Former Premier Frank Hsieh told the Director on April 1 he would help the DPP by using his Wednesday afternoon radio program to strongly urge former President Chen Shui-bian to remain quiet and stop playing politics. Hsieh said he had advised DPP Chair Tsai Ing-wen that the party needed to cut its ties with Chen, but he acknowledged that she did not have the "strength" to do it herself. Thus, Hsieh offered to "play the role" and suggested former DPP Chairman Hsu Hsin-liang might join him in the effort. Referring to recent press reports that Chen Shui-bian had expressed interest in running for a legislative seat in Tainan County, Hsieh criticized the former president for trying to play politics while on trial for serious corruption charges.

¶3. (C) As for Chen's corruption trial, Hsieh believed the former president should take some responsibility, noting that sending money overseas was wrong. However, Hsieh also criticized the ruling KMT's handling of the cases and the leaking of information to the media. He predicted the KMT will continue to play the "Ah-bian card" for some time, with President Ma poised to pardon Chen at some future point in an effort to curry public favor. Hsieh described judicial cases as "Ma's weapon," suggesting the KMT may be saving some evidence for later use.

14. (C) Hsieh underscored his support for Tsai Ing-wen, noting he had asked other DPP heavyweights not to stand in her way but instead give "hope" to the party's younger generation. The DPP needs to remain united, he stressed, especially since other opposition parties may field candidates to run in the December local elections, a move that could take votes away from DPP candidates.

December Local Elections

15. (C) Hsieh acknowledged the DPP's difficulties in nominating candidates to run in some districts in the December local elections. He believed the DPP planned to nominate legislator Yeh Yi-jin for Tainan County magistrate and probably had worked out a compromise with former Presidential Office Secretary General Mark Chen who also was lobbying for the nomination. Hsieh suggested Mark Chen might run for a Tainan County legislative seat. (Note: Later the same day, the DPP's Central Executive Committee selected another Tainan County legislator, Lee Chun-yee, to run for county magistrate in December. Yeh Yi-jin may have hurt her own chances by recently calling on former President Chen at the Taipei Detention Center. The meeting generated considerable controversy within the party over allegations that Chen was trying to strike a political deal with Yeh that would allow him to run for her legislative seat.)

16. (C) Hsieh highlighted the importance of the Taipei County magistrate race and said former Premier Su Tseng-chang would likely be the DPP candidate. If Su is the candidate, then the KMT may encourage outgoing Taoyuan County Magistrate Eric Chu to run against him. According to Hsieh, this scenario

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should suit KMT Vice Chairman Wu Den-yih, because Chu would be unable to compete with him to be appointed the next premier after the December local elections. The longer the KMT delayed in selecting a candidate, the better the DPP's chances of winning Taipei County, Hsieh suggested.

17. (C) Hsieh said the DPP stands a chance of winning in the currently KMT-controlled Yilan, Nantou and Taipei counties but could lose some of the seats it currently holds in southern Taiwan. Areas where the DPP could have problems include Kaohsiung, Pingtung and Yunlin counties. Hsieh believed the return of campaign strategist Wu Nai-jen to his former position as DPP Secretary General might help the party as it prepares for the elections. However, he added, Wu was neither Tsai's first nor second choice for the position.

On Ma and ECFA

18. (C) Revealing his distaste for Ma Ying-jeou, who defeated him in the March 2008 presidential election, Hsieh called Ma "stupid" and "incapable." Hsieh questioned Ma's rush to sign an Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement with China, maintaining that Taiwan should take its time to discuss details. Ma should not count on resolving Taiwan's economic woes by leaning solely on China, he said, but should first focus on addressing domestic issues. Pointing to the growing unemployment problem, Hsieh criticized Ma for failing to create new jobs, adding that current government programs aimed at keeping students in school for an extra year only drag out the problem. Hsieh also argued that the money Ma used on consumption vouchers would have been better spent if used to fund new jobs.

Comment

19. (C) Hsieh appeared in good spirits, shaking his leg and saying he could do "hip-hop" dances to show us that he was in good health. According to our DPP contacts, he has been busy

recently making arrangements for a number of proteges to run for city and county council seats in the December local elections. Perhaps waiting for whatever new opportunities the developing political situation may present, Hsieh is using his radio program to maintain his influence and stay involved.

YOUNG